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**HUTCHINGS FAMILY  
PAPERS  
1804-1970**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Hutchings Family Papers contain materials on many of the most prominent members of the Hutchings family including Christopher Hutchings, Colonel Thomas Hutchings, Major John Hutchings, and Stockley Donelson Hutchings. The papers were given to Tennessee State Library and Archives by Dr. Richard B. Smith, Atlanta, Georgia, in 1971.

The materials in this finding aid measure .42 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the materials.

Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Christopher Hutchings Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Hutchings Family Papers, containing approximately five hundred and fifty items and one volume, are concentrated primarily between the years 1815 and 1870. The collection is composed of accounts (bills, notes, receipts), correspondence, genealogical data, legal documents, medical accounts, plantation records, school records, and some miscellaneous items.

Most of the prominent figures in these papers are related to the Hutchings family. Colonel Thomas Hutchings (ca. 1740-1810), son of Christopher Hutchings who came from England and was one of the early settlers of Virginia, was a surveyor in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. In 1768, Thomas Hutchings married Catherine Donelson (ca. 1748-1835), daughter of John Donelson (1718-1785) and Rachel (Stockley) Donelson (ca. 1730-1801). From Virginia, Thomas Hutchings moved his family to Kentucky where Christopher Hutchings (ca. 1774-1854) was born in Mercer County near Harrodsburg. After abandoning the John Donelson party (1779-1780) near present day Paducah, Kentucky, the Hutchingses resided for a time at Kaskaskia, Illinois, before joining another party headed by Donelson which arrived in the Cumberland Settlement about 1780 or 1781. The Hutchings family then settled near the site of "The Hermitage" where Thomas Hutchings died in 1810. Catherine Hutchings eventually moved to Madison County, Tennessee, where she was living in the home of her youngest son William E. Hutchings at the time of her death in 1835.

Christopher Hutchings, together with his brothers Major John Hutchings (ca. 1770-1817) and Stockley Donelson Hutchings (ca. 1780-1821), served during the War of 1812 under General Andrew Jackson and at New Orleans under the command of General John Coffee.

By this time John Hutchings was associated with Andrew Jackson in the management of the Jackson plantation and the store at Hunter's Hill. Somewhat later Hutchings, Jackson, and Coffee became partners in the mercantile business at Clover Bottom. Jackson and Hutchings acquired large tracts of land near Milton's Bluff and in northern Alabama near Florence. Sometime after the Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814), Hutchings moved to Huntsville where he maintained a large plantation.

In his will dated November 7, 1817, John Hutchings devised his estate in lands and slaves to his son Andrew Jackson Hutchings (1813-1841) and appointed Andrew Jackson as the child's guardian. This will, in the handwriting of Andrew Jackson, was the first to be recorded in Huntsville, Alabama. It was attested by Andrew Jackson, Mrs. Andrew Jackson, and by two of Hutchings's younger brothers Thomas Hutchings, Jr., and Christopher Hutchings. Although Andrew Jackson served as official guardian for Andrew Jackson Hutchings, his public duties occupied so much of his time that young Hutchings spent most of his guardianship under the supervision of General John Coffee at Hickory Hill, the Coffee plantation near Florence, Alabama.

The two most important letters found in the correspondence of this collection include the one written by Christopher Hutchings to Andrew Jackson Hutchings and that written by Andrew Jackson Hutchings in reply. Writing from his plantation near Jackson, Tennessee, on November 28, 1835, Christopher Hutchings reports on family illness and the death of his young son (probably John). He also refers to the death of his mother Catherine (Donelson) Hutchings and the arrangements made for settling her estate, including the disposal of household items and the sale of a slave and her six children. Hutchings requests that his nephew assist him by relinquishing to him all claims to Catherine Hutchings's estate. A postscript provides a view of the continued westward movement of American settlers and the Texas Revolution in which Tennesseans were to play an important role. Christopher Hutchings declares that "Texas fever rages high," that several neighbors are moving and are on the way, and that "Edwin Rawlings has gone to fight for a fortune."

Andrew Jackson Hutchings's letter to Christopher Hutchings is dated December 11, 1835. He accedes to his uncle's request and officially relinquishes all interest in the Catherine Hutchings estate. On the sale of slaves, the younger Hutchings earnestly requests that if it is Rose and family they should not be "sold out of the family." The letter is concluded with the family news and a report on the season's disappointing cotton crop – only thirty-five bales from two hundred and twenty-five acres.

Other correspondence deals with the following subjects: payment of accounts; collection of claims; cotton shipments to Memphis; cotton and livestock in Holmes County, Mississippi; settlement of the Hutchings estate; family news from Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee; genealogical data; sale and settlement of land; slave sales; and visits with friends and relatives.

The various accounts (household and miscellaneous) which make up a major part of the collection are primarily those of Christopher Hutchings and Louisa Ann Hutchings concerning the household expenses of their plantation in Madison County near Jackson, Tennessee. Other accounts included are those of John H. Cross, Hutchings's son-in-law, a cotton planter of Poinsett County, Arkansas.

In addition to the genealogical data found in the correspondence, there are notes made by Dr. Richard B. Smith of Atlanta, Georgia, concerning the Donelson, Dyas, Coffee, and Hutchings families. Dr. Smith seeks to reconcile his data with that provided by Robert Dyas of Florence, Alabama.

Most important of the legal documents included in the collection is a copy of the probate will of Christopher Hutchings. Dated November 7, 1854, and witnessed by Richard I. Hays and William M. Tidwell, Hutchings devised the greater part of his estate including a bounty land warrant for eighty acres (issued to Christopher Hutchings under an Act of Congress, September 1850), to his wife Louisa A. Hutchings who was also appointed executrix of the estate. To his daughter Mary P. (Mrs. John H.) Cross he willed a thirteen-year-old Negro girl named Gilly. The will was admitted to probate and recorded in the Madison County court at Jackson, Tennessee, on March 17, 1858.

Another legal document of interest because of its bearing on the politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction period in Tennessee is the voter registration form for Stockley D. Hutchings, son of Christopher Hutchings, who is declared as being not guilty of acts of disloyalty as prescribed by the Reconstruction Act of February 25, 1867, and thus is entitled to vote as of July 8, 1869. Other legal documents are title abstracts, real estate deeds, court summonses, and a poll book for Searcy Township, Poinsett County, Arkansas, for an 1859 election.

Plantation records spanning the years 1815 to 1870 provide an interesting study of one of the most dynamic periods in the history of the predominately agrarian South. Beginning with the boom days of rapid acquisition and cultivation of rich western lands following the War of 1812 and extending to Reconstruction after the Civil War, this era witnessed the development, expansion, and eventual decline of the cotton plantation as the dominant feature in the region's economic and social life. In these papers the Christopher Hutchings plantation becomes a microcosm of plantation life in the Old South.

Expansion in land holdings was an important feature in the economy of the cotton South. The Hutchings brothers were quite active in land acquisition. John Hutchings, a partner of Andrew Jackson, had expansive holdings in northern Alabama while Stockley Donelson Hutchings operated a plantation in Holmes County, Mississippi. Although the acreage of the Christopher Hutchings plantation is not specified in these papers, one can surmise that it was rather extensive requiring an overseer and a number of slaves. By 1835, Hutchings had finally determined to make a permanent settlement in Madison County, Tennessee, and had acquired and combined several smaller farms including land once owned by his brother Thomas Hutchings, Jr. In addition to the data for the Hutchings plantation, there are records for the plantation of John H. Cross, son-in-law of Christopher Hutchings.

Other plantation records concern the purchase and maintenance of equipment; slaves purchased, sold, and hired to work for other planters; livestock and produce sales; and an account book (one volume) of miscellaneous data, including a list of overnight lodgers for the years 1851 and 1852.

Among the various receipts in the collection are those for payment of school tuition (1837-1859) for Elizabeth Hutchings, Frank Hutchings, Stockley Hutchings, and William E. Hutchings, the children of Christopher and Louisa Hutchings. There are also tax receipts for the period 1819-1895; receipts for medical expenses, 1820-1865; and promissory notes for money borrowed and loaned by Christopher and Louisa Hutchings between 1819 and 1868.

Miscellaneous items include announcements of deaths and weddings, lists of accounts, notes, and a photograph which is probably that of the Hutchings or related families.

## **BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH**

### **Christopher Hutchings**

- ca. 1774      Born in Mercer County, Kentucky, near Harrodsburg, the son of Thomas and Catherine (Donelson) Hutchings of Pittsylvania County, Virginia
- 1780-1781      Moved to Kaskaskia, Illinois, with family; later moved to Cumberland Settlement and settled in the vicinity of "The Hermitage"
- 1812-1815      Served during the War of 1812 under General Andrew Jackson; was under General John Coffee's command at New Orleans
- 1829      March 19, married Louisa Ann Edwards of North Carolina in Madison County, Tennessee
- Operated cotton plantation in Madison County near Jackson, Tennessee
- 1854      Died at plantation

The children of Christopher and Louisa Hutchings are:

Mary P. Hutchings  
Elizabeth Cook Hutchings  
John Hutchings  
Frank E. Hutchings  
Jackson Hutchings  
Fanny A. Hutchings  
John Hutchings  
Stockley D. Hutchings  
William E. Hutchings

## CONTAINER LIST

### **Box 1**

1. Accounts – Household, 1804-1840
2. Accounts – Household, 1841-1847
3. Accounts – Household, 1848-1850
4. Accounts – Household, 1851-1854
5. Accounts – Household, 1855-1856
6. Accounts – Household, 1857-1858
7. Accounts – Household, 1859-1861
8. Accounts – Household, 1862-1881
9. Accounts – Household
10. Accounts – Miscellaneous, 1804-1840
11. Accounts – Miscellaneous, 1841-1854
12. Accounts – Miscellaneous, 1856-1859
13. Accounts – Miscellaneous, 1860-1895
14. Correspondence – Author unknown – Hays
15. Correspondence – Hutchings, A.J.
16. Correspondence – Hutchings, C. – Tomlinson
17. Genealogical data – Donelson, Dyas, Coffee, and Hutchings families
18. Legal documents – Abstracts, deeds, poll book, summonses, voter registration, will, 1820-1865
19. Miscellaneous
20. Plantation records – Cotton, 1843-1870
21. Plantation records – Equipment, 1835-1860
22. Plantation records –Livestock, lodging, sales, slaves, 1815-1859
23. Promissory notes, 1819-1853
24. Promissory notes, 1855-1858
25. Promissory notes, 1859-1868
26. Receipts – Judgments against C. Hutchings, 1827-1860
27. Receipts – Medical, 1820-1865
28. Receipts – School tuition, 1837-1859
29. Receipts – Taxes, 1819-1871
30. Receipts – Taxes, 1874-1895

## NAME INDEX

This is a name index of the correspondence only in the Christopher Hutchings Papers, together with the dates of the letters and information regarding their contents. The figures in parentheses denote the number of letters, if more than one. The last numbers refer to the box and folder in which the material is to be found.

- Author unknown (2), n.d., 1-14  
Bliss, John L., 1854, re: payment of account, 1-14  
Butler, W.E., 1837, re: Hutchings real estate deed, 1-14  
Chester, Robert I., n.d., re: claims mule, 1-14  
Cross, David C., 1866, re: collection of Roberson estate notes, 1-14  
Cross, John H., 1855, re: cart to Isaiah Tidwell, 1-14  
Cross, Mary H. (3), 1848, 1856, re: family news from Arkansas; Tennessee visit; death of daughter Ida, 1-14  
Davis, Wilkerson, 1841, re: hogs caused crop damage, 1-14  
Deberry, P.A., 1845, re: assistance for sister, 1-14  
Dupree, D.R., 1848, re: cotton shipment to Memphis, 1-14  
Dyas, Robert, 1915, re: genealogical data, 1-14  
Edwards, S.C., 1838, re: dinner invitation, 1-14  
Ewing, W., n.d., re: debt payment, 1-14  
Fitz, James A., n.d., re: saw for Mr. Hutchings, 1-14  
Freeman, S.O., 1850, re: school claim for Walnut Grove, Tennessee, 1-14  
Green, Douglas, 1970, re: confirm Andrew Jackson Hutchings's letter (attached note), 1-14  
Hays, S.A. 1862, re: visit postponement, 1-14  
Hutchings, Andrew Jackson, 1835, re: sale of Negroes belonging to Catherine Hutchings estate, 1-15  
Hutchings, Christopher, 1835, re: land settlement; estate of Catherine Hutchings; Texas fever, 1-16  
Hutchings, Louisa, 1860, re: settlement of Christopher Hutchings estate, 1-16  
Hutchings, William, 1841, re: cotton and livestock in Holmes County, Mississippi, 1-16  
Kilby, John R., 1858, re: land payment, 1-16  
McVey, L.P., 1841, re: implements for Christopher Hutchings, 1-16  
Preston, Nicholas, 1841, re: assistance for Elizabeth Hutchings, 1-16  
Tomlinson, Ellen, 1848, re: libel suit against Tom Tomlinson, 1-16